

Application Serial No. 10/726,245
Response dated September 1, 2006
Reply to Office Action dated June 2, 2006

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The preceding amendments and following remarks are submitted in response to the Final Office Action mailed June 2, 2006, setting a three month shortened statutory response ending September 2, 2006. Claims 1-44 remain pending in this Application. Reconsideration, examination and allowance of all pending claims are respectfully requested.

Interview

Applicants thank the Examiner for the telephone interview with their representative on August 22, 2006. The claimed method step of providing interview questions as compared to Rosen's user instructions was discussed. Proposed claim amendments were also discussed. No agreement was reached, but the Examiner agreed to review a set of proposed claims prior to filing this RCE. Applicants thank the Examiner for reviewing the proposed claims and further discussing them on August 29, 2006. The amendments to the claims set forth above are the same as the proposed amendments faxed to the Examiner on August 28, 2006.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

In paragraph 7 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 4-6, 9, 13-17, 19, 20, 22-24, 26-28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39-41, and 43-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Rosen (U.S. Patent No. 6,824,069). Applicants must respectfully disagree.

Independent claims 1 and 24 have been amended to recite a method of programming a schedule of an HVAC controller, and to emphasizes the step of asking questions, which is distinguished from Rosen's step of giving commands or instructions. Independent claim 37 has been amended to recite a method of programming a schedule of an HVAC controller and to emphasize the method step of sequentially posing a number of queries to a user. The method of Rosen appears to provide user's manual type instructions or commands on the display to aid a user in using the thermostat. Rosen teaches his programmable thermostat as displaying an explanation of the function of buttons. See the Abstract. This explanation issues commands or

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instructions to the user, just like an instruction manual. See FIGS. 3-4, where the commands, "Touch 'PGM' to change current time, periods and/or temperatures or to start/stop vacation mode" and "to change period times touch 'PRD'" are illustrated. The screens of Rosen issue instructions or commands to the user, but do not ask questions, as recited in the claims. Applicants submit that the claimed specific method step of asking two or more interview questions of a user is not anticipated by Rosen's teaching of displaying commands or instructions for a user.

Similar to the independent method claims, independent controller claims 16, 23, and 31 have been amended to recite an HVAC controller that has a user interface adapted and configured to ask questions of a user, accept responses from the user, and modify one or more schedule parameter based on those questions and responses. As indicated above with respect to the method claims, Rosen teaches a controller that issues commands or instructions regarding how to use the thermostat, just as an instruction manual does. Rosen does not appear to teach or suggest a controller that asks questions of a user, as is recited in the claims. Applicants submit that the instant controller claims are thus distinguished over Rosen.

Another way to look at the differences between the method of Rosen and the claimed methods is that, if anything, Rosen is giving instructions based on assumed questions and answers. For example, looking at FIG. 3, Rosen assumes a question of 'would a user like to change the current time, periods, temperatures or to start or stop vacation mode', assumes the answer is 'yes', and then gives instructions or commands to aid the user in modifying one or more parameters. In contrast, the claimed method asks questions of the user, accepts answers from the user, and uses those answers to create or modify one or more schedule parameter. While the end result in the claimed methods and Rosen may be similar, that of setting up or modifying a schedule, the method steps used to achieve that result are very different. Independent claims 1, 24, and 37 are directed to methods, thus the actual steps in the methods must be considered. Applicants submit that the method steps recited in claims 1, 24, and 37, as amended, are distinguished from Rosen.

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MPEP 2131 states that, in order to anticipate a claim, "[t]he identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as is contained in the ... claim.' Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co., 868 F.2d 1226, 1236, 9 USPQ2d 1913, 1920 (Fed. Cir. 1989)." Applicants submit that Rosen does not teach the identical invention is as complete detail as is contained in the claims, as is required for an anticipation rejection.

The Examiner has not indicated specifically which portion of Rosen is seen as anticipating the claimed method step or user interface, pointing to the abstract in general. The abstract of Rosen, and also the entire disclosure, appear to disclose a method in which the controller provides instructions or commands to the user regarding how to program the device. Rosen displays alphanumeric messages explaining the function of a button are displayed, and the user is invited to push an appropriate button to make a desired change. In particular, Rosen states, "A user is invited, if desired, to touch the 'PGM' button 32 to change the current time", "display of FIG. 4 invites a user to select one of four available actions", "he is unmistakably directed to touch", "user is prompted to, by the alphanumeric message above the 'NEXT' button 37, to touch", "the user is directed to touch 'RUN' button 42", "then touches the 'NEXT' button 61 as invited by the alphanumeric message presented above that button", and "message invites the user to touch the 'PGM' button 32V". (Emphasis added; see column 5, lines 22-24, 31-32, 57-58, 66 through column 6, line 1, and column 6, lines 19, 31-33, 62-63). Rosen thus appears to provide messages on the display instructing or inviting the user to push various buttons or portions of the touch-screen in order to advance through menus or make changes to the program. Rosen does not, however, appear to ask questions of the user, for which the user would provide a response, as is recited in the claims.

Applicants submit that the instruction or command to push a button taught by Rosen does not anticipate the step of asking questions recited in the methods and controllers as claimed. One of ordinary skill in the art would understand that, in the method and system of Rosen, the user is given commands or instructions regarding which buttons to push for various functions, thus telling the user what to do. The claimed methods and controllers, however, ask questions of the

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user. Applicants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would understand that asking questions is not identical to giving instructions or commands.

The Examiner asserts that Rosen teaches a user interface providing at least two or more programming steps asking for the times and temperatures, pointing to FIGS. 5-10 for support. A careful review of the figures reveals, however, that the user interface gives commands or instructions to the user, and does not ask questions. The user interface illustrated in FIG. 5 shows the message "SET BEGINNING TIME FOR PERIOD 1 THEN TOUCH 'NEXT'". FIGS. 6-10 show similar messages all of which give commands or instructions to the user, but do not ask questions, as is recited in the claims. Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary defines the word question as "an interrogative sentence or clause". Applicants submit that the commands given by the method and system of Rosen are not questions as recited in the claims.

Regarding claims 4-6 and 26, 27, the Examiner asserts that Rosen teaches providing one or more interview questions that are natural language questions or phrases having three or more words, pointing to FIGS. 5-10 and column 5, line 56 to column 6, line 41 for support. As discussed above, FIGS. 5-10 of Rosen show instructions provided on the user interface, telling the user what to do in order to achieve a desired result. The user interface is not shown asking questions of the user. Column 5, line 56 through column 6, line 41 of Rosen states:

Accordingly, if a user wishes, from the menu shown in FIG. 4, to change the period times, he is unmistakably directed to touch the "PRD" button 33. In response, the processor 1 causes a lower level menu such as that shown in FIG. 5 to be displayed to begin setting the discrete periods during which different temperature set points may be established. Assuming in the example that four periods are available, a user may set the beginning of "Period 1" to any time of day by using the "UP" button 38A and/or the "DN" button 39A until, say, 11:00 PM is shown in the prominent time display to the left of the buttons 38A, 39A. The user is prompted to, by the alphanumeric message above the "NEXT" button 37, to touch the "NEXT" button 37 after the beginning time for "Period 1" has been established. Touching the NEXT button 37 causes the processor to present the slightly different display shown in FIG. 6 from which the ending time for "Period 1" may be set. This step, in the example, also establishes the beginning time for "Period 2". After setting the ending time for "Period 1" by selectively touching the "UP" button 38B and/or the "DN" button 39B until, say, 6:30 AM is reached, the user touches the "NEXT" button 40 to bring up an almost identical

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display (not shown) for setting the ending time for "PERIOD 2" to, say, 4:30 PM which also sets the beginning time for "Period 3" and then proceeds to the screen shown in FIG. 7. From the menu shown in FIG. 7, the user sets, using buttons 38D, 39D, the ending time, say 9:30 PM, for "Period 3" which also establishes the beginning time for "Period 4". (The ending time for "Period 4" is the same as the already entered beginning time for "Period 1".) After this information as been entered, the user is directed to touch "RUN" button 42 which returns the thermostat system to normal operation and again brings up the menu shown in FIG. 3.

If a user wishes to change the temperature set point in any of the exemplary four periods, the "PGM" button 32 is touched to move to the menu of FIG. 4 and the "TEMP" button 34 is touched as urged by the relevant alphanumeric message" and, if provided, the icon indicator arrow 34A. The menu shown in FIG. 8 appears in response and in which the current set point for "Period 1", 68.degree. F. in the example, is prominently shown. The user touches the "UP" button 51A and/or the "Down" button 52A as necessary to set a new set point for this period and then touches the "NEXT" button 61 as invited by the alphanumeric message presented above that button. Almost identical (only the alphanumeric message being suitably revised) menus (not shown) successively appear for making the corresponding adjustments to the set points for "Period 2" and "Period 3" after which the menu shown in FIG. 9 appears. After the set point is adjusted for "Period 4" by touching the buttons 54A, 54B as necessary, the user is invited to touch the "RUN" button 64 which will again return the system to normal operation with the menu shown in FIG. 3 presented.

(Emphasis added). Rosen thus appears to describe the user interface as directing, prompting, and inviting the user to touch various regions on the display in order to program the controller. Rosen does not appear to teach any step of providing one or more interview questions that are natural language questions, or phrases, as recited in the claims. Applicants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would not interpret the directing, prompting, and inviting statements of Rosen as being questions.

Rosen does not appear to teach each and every element of independent claims 1, 16, 23, 24, 31, or 37 and thus cannot be seen to anticipate the claims. Additionally, dependent claims 4-6, 9, 13-15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 26-28, 30, 33, 34, 36, 39-41, 43, and 44 recite further elements not taught by Rosen and are thus also not anticipated by Rosen.

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35 U.S.C. § 103 Rejections

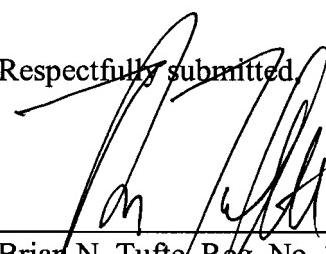
In paragraph 8 of the Final Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 2, 3, 7, 8, 18, 25, 32, and 38 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rosen in view of Hoog (U.S. Patent Application No. 2004/0193324). In paragraph 9 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 10-12, 21, 29, 35, and 42 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rosen in view of Bennett (U.S. Patent No. 5,877,957).

For at least the reasons provided above, Applicants respectfully submit that Rosen does not appear to teach or suggest the basic elements of independent claims 1, 16, 24, 31, and 37. Neither Hoog nor Bennett appear to provide what Rosen lacks. For these and other reasons, dependent claims 2, 3, 7, 8, 10-12, 18, 21, 25, 29, 32, 35, 38, and 42 are believed to be clearly patentable over Rosen either alone or in combination with Hoog or Bennett.

Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested. It is respectfully submitted that the claims are now in condition for allowance, and issuance of a Notice of Allowance in due course is requested. If a telephone conference might be of assistance, please contact the undersigned attorney at (612) 359-9348.

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Respectfully submitted,



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